

Preferences and Behaviour of Gen Z Voters in the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election

Preferensi dan Perilaku Pemilih Gen Z dalam Pemilihan Presiden Indonesia 2024



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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the preferences and political behaviour of first-time voters in the 2024 elections, focusing on how religious beliefs, rationalism, and social media impact their political judgments. The primary objective of this research is to explore the factors influencing the political decisions of Generation Z voters, who constitute a significant demographic in the electoral process. The study aims to assess the extent to which social media platforms shape political awareness and decision-making while also examining the role of digital literacy in fostering informed political participation. The study employs a qualitative descriptive method using a cluster random sampling strategy, with approximately 204 University Ahmad Dahlan (UAD) students as respondents. The findings indicate that social media platforms, particularly Instagram and TikTok, have become the dominant sources of political information, reflecting a shift from traditional to digital media. First-time voters prioritize politicians with clear visions, goals, and concrete work programs over those engaging in negative campaigns. Additionally, the study highlights the challenges young voters face, including money politics and low political engagement at the local level. Despite these obstacles, the strong rejection of money politics and the commitment to clean democracy among youth voters demonstrate their potential to drive ethical and inclusive political reforms. Based on these findings, this study recommends enhancing digital literacy programs to equip young voters with critical thinking skills when consuming political content online. Future research should further explore the long-term effects of social media-driven political engagement and investigate how different digital platforms influence voter behaviour across diverse socio-political contexts. Expanding the study to a broader demographic beyond university students may also provide deeper insights into the evolving dynamics of youth political participation.

Kata Kunci

*Perilaku Politik;
 Preferensi Politik;
 Kesadaran Politik;
 Pemilih Muda;
 Demokrasi yang Bersih;*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menyelidiki preferensi dan perilaku politik pemilih pemula pada Pemilu 2024, dengan fokus pada bagaimana keyakinan agama, rasionalisme, dan media sosial memengaruhi penilaian politik mereka. Tujuan utama dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi keputusan politik pemilih Generasi Z, yang merupakan demografi yang signifikan dalam proses pemilu. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menilai sejauh mana platform media sosial membentuk kesadaran politik dan pengambilan keputusan, serta mengkaji peran literasi digital dalam mendorong partisipasi politik yang terinformasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan menggunakan strategi cluster random sampling, dengan sekitar 204 mahasiswa Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD) sebagai responden. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa platform media sosial, terutama Instagram dan TikTok, telah menjadi sumber informasi politik yang dominan, yang mencerminkan pergeseran dari media tradisional ke media digital. Pemilih pemula lebih memprioritaskan politisi yang memiliki visi, tujuan, dan

	<p>program kerja yang jelas daripada mereka yang terlibat dalam kampanye negatif. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga menyoroti tantangan yang dihadapi pemilih muda, termasuk politik uang dan rendahnya keterlibatan politik di tingkat lokal. Terlepas dari kendala-kendala tersebut, penolakan yang kuat terhadap politik uang dan komitmen terhadap demokrasi yang bersih di kalangan pemilih muda menunjukkan potensi mereka untuk mendorong reformasi politik yang beretika dan inklusif. Berdasarkan temuan-temuan tersebut, penelitian ini merekomendasikan untuk meningkatkan program literasi digital untuk membekali pemilih muda dengan keterampilan berpikir kritis saat mengonsumsi konten politik secara online. Penelitian di masa depan harus mengeksplorasi lebih jauh efek jangka panjang dari keterlibatan politik yang didorong oleh media sosial dan menyelidiki bagaimana platform digital yang berbeda memengaruhi perilaku pemilih di berbagai konteks sosial-politik. Memperluas penelitian ini ke demografi yang lebih luas di luar mahasiswa juga dapat memberikan wawasan yang lebih dalam tentang dinamika partisipasi politik kaum muda yang terus berkembang.</p>
<p>Article History Send 13th January 2025 Review 24th January 2024 Accepted 02th February 2024</p>	<p>Copyright ©2024 Jurnal Aristo (Social, Politic, Humaniora) This is an open access article under the CC-BY-NC-SA license. Akses artikel terbuka dengan model CC-BY-NC-SA sebagai lisensinya.</p>



Introduction

The 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election marked a significant milestone in the nation's democratic journey, with over 200 million eligible voters participating in one of the largest elections in Southeast Asia. A particularly notable trend was the substantial involvement of first-time voters, primarily from Generation Y and Generation Z, who together represented more than 50% of the electorate. This demographic has become a pivotal force in shaping Indonesia's political trajectory. Understanding their preferences and behaviours is essential, as their collective decisions are poised to influence the nation's governance for decades to come. Recent studies highlight the growing importance of social media as a dominant source of election-related information among younger voters. As Putra and Syahri (2023) noted, "Social media platforms have become a double-edged sword for political engagement among Indonesian youth, fostering both awareness and polarization" (Journal of Southeast Asian Studies). Approximately 29.4% of first-time voters reported using social media several times weekly to access political content, surpassing traditional sources like television and newspapers. This transition underscores the evolving dynamics of voter engagement in the digital age.

Moreover, candidate appeal among new voters reflects their focus on relatable leadership and progressive policies. Surveys conducted by the Indonesian Institute of Political Research (2023) revealed that the majority of respondents aged 18–24 identified with candidates who emphasized innovation, education, and job creation. "The youth are not merely passive participants but active drivers of change in Indonesia's democratic process," explains Hasanuddin (2023) in Asian Journal of Political Science. This highlights the role of digital outreach and grassroots campaigns in shaping their preferences. The 2024 election underscores the critical role of new voters in Indonesia's democracy. By comprehending the intersection of digital influence and youth priorities, policymakers and candidates alike can better align their strategies to engage this transformative demographic effectively.

Muhammadiyah youth also have a significant role in the dynamics of Indonesian politics, especially in the 2024 elections. As part of the largest modernist Islamic organization in Indonesia, they bring a unique religious and social perspective in choosing political leaders. As an organization based on modernist Islamic principles, Muhammadiyah has a long history of shaping the social and political views of its members. In the context of young Muhammadiyah voters, their political preferences reflect a combination of religious values and a rational understanding of social, economic and political issues. This creates a unique voter

base, where considerations based on moral values and rationality are the main factors in political decision making.

Based on a survey conducted on University Ahmad Dahlan (UAD) students as representatives of Muhammadiyah students, it was found that the majority of young voters use social media as the main platform for seeking political information. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok dominate, showing how the younger generation is adopting digital technology to understand political issues. Apart from that, the survey also shows that young voters are more interested in campaign content that contains the candidate's ideas, vision and mission compared to campaigns that are negative or provocative.

However, despite this improvement, difficulties persist. Young voters confront several major difficulties, including the practice of money politics, a lack of faith in political institutions, and poor involvement at the local level. Their tough position against money politics, as well as their devotion to clean democracy, indicate enormous promise for developing a higher-quality political process in the future. This study seeks to delve deeper into young voters' preferences and behaviours. The emphasis is on determining the elements that impact their political decisions, such as social media use, political awareness, and electoral integrity. This research seeks to understand how Muhammadiyah values impact political behaviour among its members, as well as how they can become agents of change in pushing for a more inclusive and dignified democracy in Indonesia.

This research is grounded in two pivotal theoretical frameworks that provide a comprehensive lens to understand the political preferences and behaviors of young voters in Universitas Ahmad Dahlan students. The first is Voter Behavior Theory, which explains that political decisions are shaped by a combination of psychological, social, and rational factors. Campbell et al. (1960), in *The American Voter*, argue that party identification, orientation to issues, and candidate evaluation are core elements influencing voting behavior. For Muhammadiyah youth, religious identification and adherence to Muhammadiyah values play a significant role in shaping their political preferences (Bartels, 2010).

The second framework is Social Media Theory and Political Participation, which highlights the transformative role of social media in modern politics. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) emphasize that social media enables personalized, two-way interactions between political candidates and voters. Younger generations, including Muhammadiyah youth, actively use platforms like Instagram and TikTok to consume political content, thereby enhancing their participation in the political process (Evita, 2023). This demonstrates how digital platforms have reshaped the political engagement landscape.

By integrating these two theoretical perspectives, this research establishes a focused analytical framework to explore the political preferences, voting behaviours, and the significant influence of social media among young Muhammadiyah voters. This approach underscores the interplay of traditional social factors and modern technological influences in shaping the political decisions of the younger generation.

Method

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach. Primary data was collected through a survey of UAD students using a cluster random sampling technique, involving 204 respondents. Secondary data was obtained from related literature, including academic journals, Muhammadiyah documents, and political survey reports. This research uses an approach **Qualitative Descriptive** to explore a deeper understanding of the phenomena that occur among University Ahmad Dahlan (UAD) students. The Qualitative Descriptive Approach was chosen because it can provide insight into the context, patterns and perspectives that emerge from respondents' subjective experiences, as well as analyzing various factors that influence their views.

This research focuses on understanding and explaining conditions in the field, especially related to the attitudes or behaviour of UAD students as measured through questionnaires. The population in this study are young voters (17 - 22 years old) in all regions in Indonesia who incidentally are active students at University Ahmad Dahlan College. From this population, research samples were taken using techniques **Cluster Random Sampling**. This technique was chosen because it allows researchers to select groups of students based on faculties or study programs at the university, which are then randomized to ensure sample representativeness. As much 204 respondents randomly selected representatives of students from various majors and academic year levels.

Data collection is done using **survey** with a questionnaire instrument that has been specifically designed for the purposes of this research. The questionnaire consists of several parts, namely: Demographic question, Core question, and also Questionnaire, use Likert scale to measure the respondent's level of agreement or disagreement with a number of statements. Primary data in this research was collected through **questionnaire distribution** directly and online to UAD students.

Following data collection, the next stage is data analysis. In this qualitative descriptive study, analysis is performed sequentially and inductively to investigate patterns that arise from the acquired data. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percentage, and distribution, were

used to analyse quantitative data collected by questionnaires. Researchers can use this strategy to properly define the features of the population under study. Thematic Analysis was used to analyse qualitative data from literature and secondary materials. The purpose of this analysis is to identify the major themes that emerge from the data and link them to the study setting. The findings of this theme analysis will aid in a better understanding of student attitudes and their link to external influences.

Results and Discussion

This research produced several important findings which are summarized in the following themes based on analysis of quantitative data from surveys and qualitative data from literature and secondary documents:

Profile of UAD Youth Voters

Based on a survey of University Ahmad Dahlan (UAD) students, the majority of respondents were in the 20-year age range (Chart 3) and were dominated by D4/S1 Bachelor level students (Chart 2) and were female (Chart 1). Activeness in campus organizations reflects a high level of political awareness. In addition, around 86% indicated their involvement in the activities of the Islamic organization Muhammadiyah.

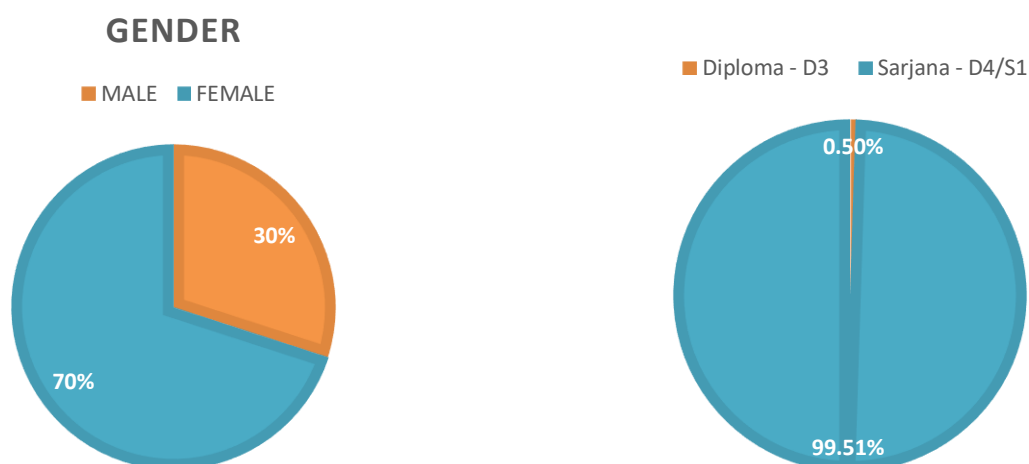


Chart 1. Respondents Profile based on gender Chart 2. Level of Education Respondents

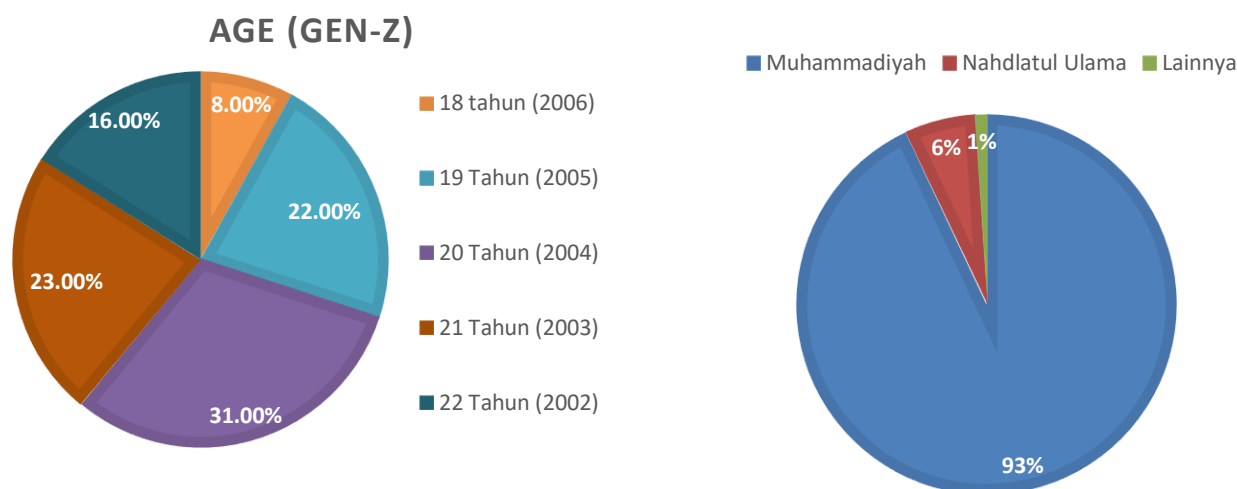


Chart 3. Respondents by Age

Chart 4. Respondents Based on Religious Organizations

Preferences and Voting Behaviour:

Religious principles, education, the candidate's vision and mission, and a strong track record all impact young voters' preferences. According to survey data, respondents choose individuals with Islamic values, a strong educational background, and specific work programs (Vision, Mission, and Ideas) (Charts 5 and 6). According to Bartels (2010) and Naifah (2024), Young Student voters prioritise values and reason in their voting decisions.

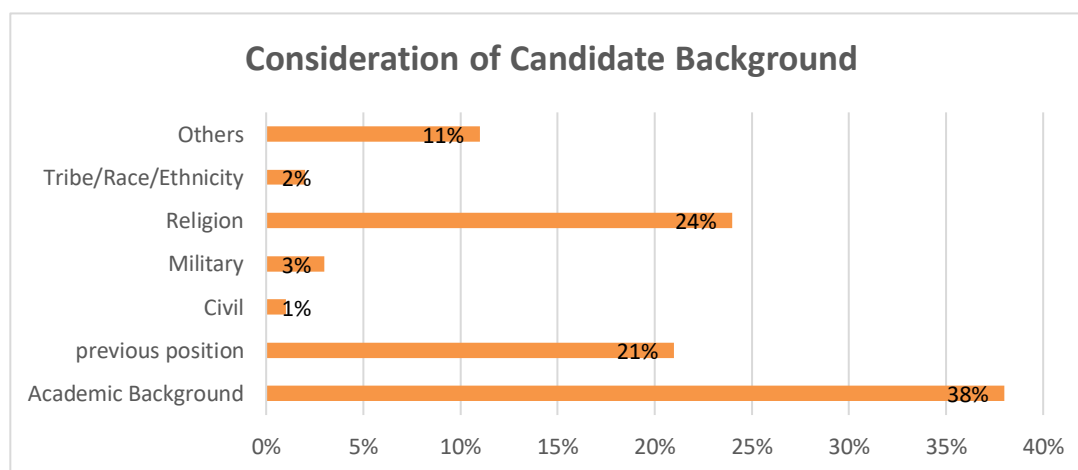


Chart 5. Preferences for Considering Candidate Backgrounds in Elections

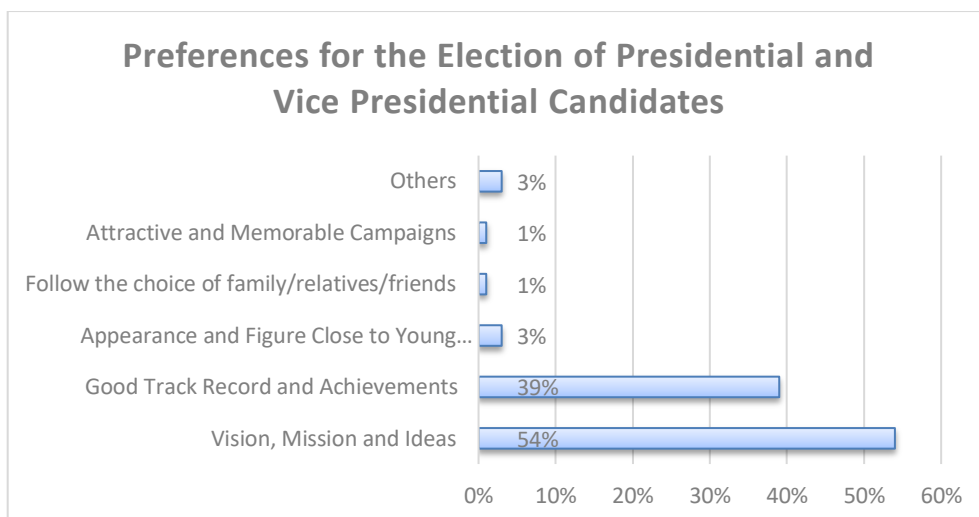


Chart 6. Preferences for Choosing President and Vice President in Elections

Influence of Social Media

Young voters rely mostly on social media for political information. Instagram and TikTok are the most popular social media platforms for discussing political concerns. According to the poll, respondents are more likely to believe content that includes ideas, vision, and mission than negative advertising. This is consistent with Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) thesis that social media allows for two-way engagement, increasing younger generations' political participation.

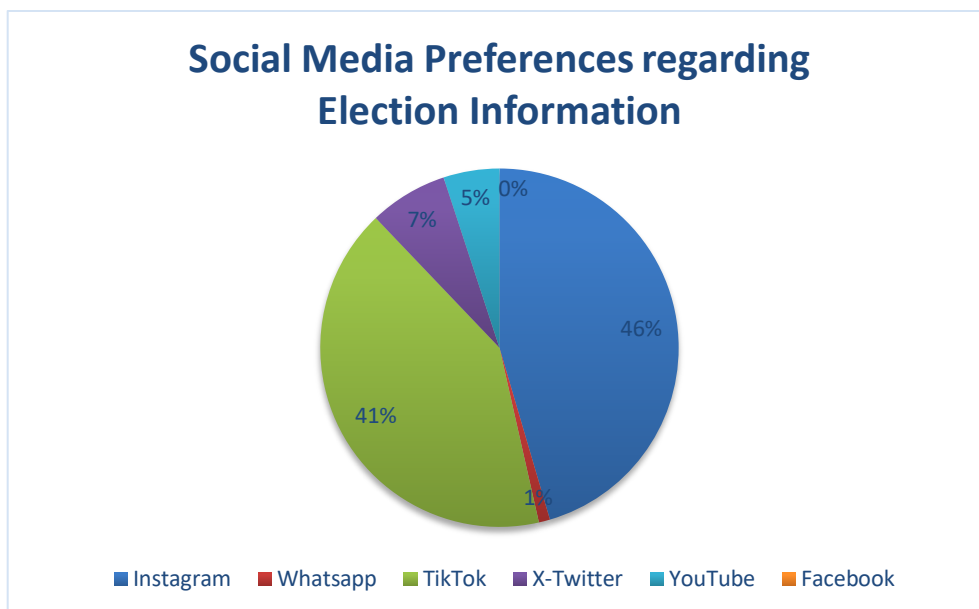


Chart 7. Social Media Preferences regarding Election Information

The research results show that the political preferences of the youth are based on a combination of rational and value factors, which are supported by the theory of voter behaviour

(Campbell et al., 1960). For example, their decisions are more focused on evaluating candidates in accordance with Islamic values and concrete vision and mission (Naifah, 2024). This factor shows the relevance of rational choice theory (Downs, 1957), where voters consider the maximum benefits of each political decision. Apart from that, the influence of social media is one of the main factors in increasing political participation. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media provides a space for young people to engage in political discussions, which has been proven to increase their awareness of important issues such as economic inequality and environmental sustainability. Data from this survey confirms that the use of social media such as Instagram and TikTok is effective in conveying political campaigns based on ideas and concrete solutions. However, challenges remain, especially in the form of economic pressures that push a small portion of voters to accept money politics. This reflects the complexity of integrating social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) with practical reality, where economic needs sometimes clash with commitment to Muhammadiyah ethical values (Budiardjo, 2008). Therefore, value-based political education is the key to reducing this negative influence.

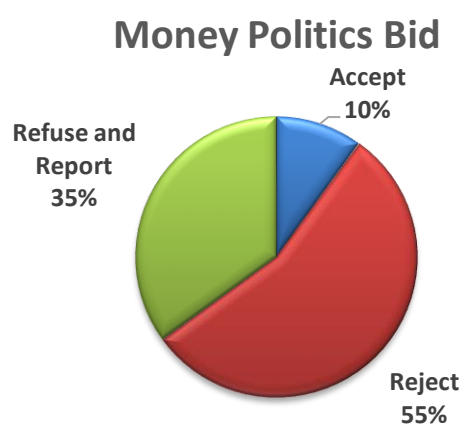


Chart 8. Behaviour towards Political Money Offers.

Other research indicates that generation Z, especially youth voters in UAD, has strong digital literacy, allowing them to be more discriminating in filtering political material (Perdana, 2023). Thus, political candidates must use digital media in a way that is more authentic and relevant to the requirements of the younger generation. Overall, this study demonstrates that religious principles, logic, and social media impact UAD youth's political preferences and behaviour. To produce more inclusive and dignified elections, strategies for improving democracy quality might focus on enhancing digital political literacy, educating people about ethical principles, and eradicating the practice of money politics.

Conclusion

This study found that young voters especially UAD student's political views and behaviour in the 2024 elections are heavily impacted by Islamic principles and rationalism, reinforced by their usage of social media as their primary source of political information. Research indicates that Gen Z students prioritise candidates with a defined vision and goal, emphasising the importance of moral principles and logical decision-making in politics. Their active engagement in politics demonstrates significant potential for creating a more inclusive and dignified democracy. However, obstacles still exist, particularly in the form of money politics and a lack of faith in political institutions. Values-based political education and increased digital literacy are critical measures for overcoming these obstacles and promoting healthy political involvement and integrity. Strengthening young ability in digital political literacy and ethical principles can lead to better and more sustainable elections in the future. This study has various limitations that must be acknowledged. First, because this study is based on a small sample of UAD students, the findings cannot be generalised to all students in Indonesia. Second, while the questionnaire has been validated for validity and reliability, there is a risk of bias in the interpretation of respondents' responses. However, these restrictions can be mitigated by ensuring that the questionnaire is properly designed and does not direct responses.

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